



FACT SHEET

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Agencies request legislation to make Discover Pass transferable between two vehicles

The Discover Pass is now the essential element in keeping public lands open to public use. The 2011 Legislature created the Discover Pass (ESB 5622) for motor-vehicle access to state recreation lands. The user fee is aimed at replacing state General Fund support that was diverted to other needs during the state's revenue shortfall. The successful launch of the Discover Pass was accomplished through the collaboration of three agencies and the support of user groups.

Issue

The Discover Pass was created in law as a single vehicle pass. In the first months of the new pass requirement for state-managed recreation lands, stakeholders and legislative constituents have requested a change to this element of the Discover Pass. There is widespread interest in moving toward pass "transferability" – allowing a single pass to be used for more than one vehicle.

In response, the three agencies have worked with 20 key public stakeholder groups representing a broad array of recreation land users. In addition, the three agencies have worked cooperatively with the Governor and legislators to explore solutions. Making the Discover Pass transferable would require legislative action to amend ESSB 5622, the measure that created the pass.

Proposal

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are proposing Discover Pass agency request legislation to the Governor. The legislation would allow the agencies to add a second line on each annual Discover Pass, so that purchasers could write in two vehicle license plates. This would allow pass holders to transfer one pass between two vehicles.

This concept was tested in a recent, statewide random survey, which indicated that it could be successful in building greater public participation and consumer choice, while effectively meeting revenue objectives.

Fiscal impact

The cost to the agencies to implement this change would be minimal.

This concept was tested in a recent statewide, random survey. Survey results indicate that the proposed approach would be more successful in effectively meeting original revenue objectives, because of greater public participation and consumer choice.

Background

The Discover Pass provides access to more than 6.5 million acres of public recreation lands managed by the State Parks, DFW and DNR. These lands include more than 1,000 locations – State Parks, DNR and DFW campgrounds, boat launches, trails and trailheads.

The pass requirement took effect July 1, requiring most recreation land users to pay \$30 for an annual Discover Pass or \$10 for a daily pass per motor vehicle. A number of exemptions are offered for land users who pay other fees, such as camping fees in state parks or fishing or hunting licenses.

After the first three months of implementation, 341,000 passes had been sold, generating more than \$6.5 million in revenue. But with the major Department of Licensing sales platform starting only in October, and many one-time start-up costs incurred, insufficient data exists at this time to accurately forecast how well the program will meet financial projections.

The Discover Pass is a new, statewide program. It was implemented on a short timeline during the peak of summer recreation land use. While the managing agencies have worked intently to build public awareness and support for the pass, more time is needed to fully implement the pass business plan. It is believed that the transferability option referenced in this fact sheet will support the business plan.